

**From:** Shore, Berry [Shore.Berry@epa.gov]  
**Sent:** 7/8/2016 12:19:54 PM  
**To:** R2 EPA Region 2 (EPA Staff) [R2\_EPA\_Region\_2\_EPA\_Staff@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** Hoosick Falls Clips - POFA/POFS

**Sen. Gillibrand to be in Hoosick Falls for PFOA meeting**

WNYT Staff

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Channel 13 NBC News (Albany)

HOOSICK FALLS – U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand is coming to Hoosick Falls on Friday to talk to those who have been told their water is contaminated with the toxic chemical PFOA.

The meeting is taking place at 3:00 p.m. at the high school auditorium. Doors open at 2:30 p.m. The meeting comes at the end of a busy week looking into who knew about this crisis -- and when.

Gillibrand will be joined by officials from the National Institute of Environmental Health Science, the EPA and the CDC.

The Senator pushed for Hoosick Falls to become a Superfund site to help expedite the cleanup there as well.

Back in February, she also called on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to hold a hearing on the effects of PFOA on drinking water.

The meeting comes after Assembly democrats said they would hold hearings on the state's response to the water crisis earlier this week.

On Thursday, the House of Representatives oversight committee announced it would be probing the response by the state and EPA.

You can find our story on the state's response to the house oversight committee's action [here](#).

NewsChannel 13 will have full coverage of the meeting on on-air and online.

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**Hoosick Falls Water Woes Draw Federal Scrutiny: Congressional committee to examine New York's handling of water contamination in the upstate village.**

U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand said Thursday she would introduce federal legislation to fight the water-contamination crisis in Hoosick Falls, N.Y., shortly after a congressional committee launched a probe into the state's handling of the issue.

The measures mark mounting federal scrutiny of how Gov. Andrew Cuomo and other public officials have addressed the matter in the upstate New York community, located about 35 miles from Albany.

"I'm grateful the governor has done a couple of things," Ms. Gillibrand, a Democrat, said in an interview. "But we need to do a lot more."

In addition to the legislation—which Ms. Gillibrand said would include funding for research into the contaminant, as well as feedback from Hoosick Falls residents she planned to meet with Friday—she reiterated her call to the head of the Senate environmental committee for federal hearings.

The U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has launched an investigation into the water contamination in Hoosick Falls, seeking information from Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, on his administration's response.

“It raises serious questions that the county and state would continue to assure residents the water was safe to drink even though the federal government had already warned residents to the contrary,” said the letter, signed by Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz and Wyoming Rep. Cynthia Lummis, both Republicans. The oversight committee sent a similar letter Wednesday to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

A spokesman for Mr. Cuomo pointed to a December 2015 memo distributed by the state health department telling Hoosick Falls residents they would reduce risk of exposure to the contaminant by avoiding the water supply. The memo came a day after the EPA said not to drink the water.

The governor's office also said the administration would “gladly share our experience in New York to clarify the facts and the steps we have taken.”

Earlier this week, the New York state Assembly said it would hold hearings in September to scrutinize water issues.

“Pure water is about as fundamental to our inalienable right to life as can be,” Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, who will preside over the hearings, said Thursday.

Hoosick Falls, with about 3,500 residents, has been rattled over the past year by the appearance of perfluorooctanoic acid in its water.

The contaminant has been linked to cancer in studies but hasn't been labeled a carcinogen. Health officials have said it may have infiltrated the water supply by way of a plastics plant in the region.

Mr. Cuomo late last year declared parts of the area a state Superfund site, classifying the contaminant as hazardous and authorizing its removal.

According to a timeline released by the Village of Hoosick Falls, county officials first informed the state of concerns about the contaminant in August 2014.

Mr. Cuomo has said he followed federal guidelines for handling the matter.

“States across the country have struggled to confront evolving information about PFOA... particularly in the face of shifting guidelines and the absence of regulation from the federal government,” a spokesman for the governor said Thursday.

In March, Mr. Cuomo visited Hoosick Falls and said the pollutant was out of the water. But his office said residents should continue to avoid the municipal water supply as officials complete their work. Later that month, officials said the water was safe to drink.

Residents have continued to express outrage, storming the governor's Albany office last month and picketing until they were granted a meeting with a Cuomo aide.

Many residents have been given state-administered blood tests showing high levels of the contaminant. They have asked for public hearings on how officials have handled the crisis, and for more research into the contaminant.

Michael Hickey, a Hoosick Falls resident who will participate at the forum on Friday, said he considers hearings a formality at this point.

Still, he said, with federal interest, “hopefully other states across the country can learn from the mistakes that were made in Hoosick Falls.”

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Ms. Gillibrand, now the highest-ranking New York official to raise questions about the Cuomo administration’s handling of the matter, said Thursday she was disturbed by news that a 6-year-old in Hoosick Falls had high levels of the contaminant in his blood.

‘All of us could have handled it better.’

— U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand

Asked if the Cuomo administration could have handled the matter better, she said, “All of us could have handled it better.”

Ms. Gillibrand added that she doesn’t live far from Hoosick Falls herself.

“I’m like any resident, saying, ‘Should I have my children blood-tested?’ ” she said. “For any mother or father...it’s terrifying.”

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### **Dirty water hearing: Can government clean house?: Officials are calling for more transparency about lead levels in Americans' drinking water. Meanwhile, the House is probing New York's response to a water crisis.**

By Lucy Schouten

July 7, 2016

[smonitor icon](#)

Congress is getting involved with tap water, a sign government officials are responding to the disaster of dirty water in Flint, Mich., by cleaning house.

Congress has asked officials in the New York and at the US Environmental Protection Agency to report on how they handled a recent scandal in the state. The residents of the Hoosick Falls, N.Y., brought questions about the quality of their drinking water to the attention of local officials in the summer of 2014. Officials initially told the inhabitants of the factory village their water was safe.

Upon further investigation, environmental regulators found high levels of Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in the factory village's drinking water. PFOA is a chemical once used to manufacture nonstick coatings, such as Teflon, until regulators realized it can contaminate drinking water.

Government transparency and timely communication of the problem are at the root of the congressional concern.

"The Committee is concerned that a sluggish response to the crisis in Hoosick Falls at the state and county levels caused residents to remain exposed to dangerous levels of PFOA for longer than was necessary," the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform wrote to the governor's office. "The Committee is looking into whether residents received misleading information that indicated the water posed no health risks, which exacerbated the crisis."

The House committee is investigating the EPA response as well, noting the agency became aware of problems with the water in December 2014 but did not notify village officials until November 2015. EPA Regional Director Judith Enck said she learned of the problem only in November, after a state attorney brought her a report.

New York's Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo has said the state will cooperate with the congressional request for information. The state has promised to further investigate the presence of PFOA in the village's public and private wells, and signed agreements with Honeywell International and Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics to clean up the mess. The governor has also called for the development of national standards on the chemical PFOA.

"We hope the end result is that Congress and the federal government act swiftly to prioritize and to implement uniform, nationwide regulations of PFOA and similar, currently unregulated contaminants," a spokesman for the governor said Thursday.

This is one of many calls for increased government transparency coming in the aftermath of a water scandal in Flint, Mich., where too little oversight on water quality left 200 children diagnosed with high levels of lead in their blood. As the incident unfolded, advocates and the public began to wonder if poor communication by the state's government – characterized by two watchdog groups as the nation's least transparent – played a role, as The Christian Science Monitor's Jessica Mendoza reported.

"If there is a silver lining in what is clearly a tragedy in Flint, it's that freedom of information, accountability, and transparency are getting noticed," Jane Briggs-Bunting, president of the Michigan Coalition for Open Government, a nonprofit advocacy that promotes government transparency, told The Monitor. "People are saying, 'You know, maybe this could've been avoided.'"

The EPA has asked all state water regulators to publish an online inventory so owners of older homes can find out whether their water still passes through lead pipes.

Although water systems were required to create these inventories in the 1990s, many were never finished or have since become outdated. Some states have resisted the call to post such information online because of concerns about technology availability or privacy. The EPA has told local governments to redact personal information if needed, but to publish the information.

"It's one of a number of transparency elements that we see as really important," EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator Joel Beauvais told the Associated Press.

The inventories do not replace existing rules that water companies inform residents directly if more than 10 percent of sampled homes fail tests for lead content, but rather they would offer water users the added protection of knowing for themselves how clean their water is.

## High levels of PFOA found in dumps in Hoosick Falls, Petersburg

By Scott Waldman

07/07/16 05:15 AM EDT

PETERSBURGH — The former town dumps in both Hoosick Falls and Petersburg are leaking dangerously high levels of a toxic chemical directly into local waterways, and have likely been doing so for years, according to test results obtained by POLITICO New York.

The town dump in Hoosick Falls tested positive for PFOA levels of 21,000 parts per trillion, a state Department of Environmental Conservation official confirmed to POLITICO New York. That's the highest PFOA level ever disclosed in the upstate village, including at the factory that has been deemed responsible for the pollution. There, the groundwater tested at 18,000 parts per trillion.

In Petersburg, about 12 miles to the south, a bright brown liquid trickling out of the dump and into a local stream that eventually connects to the Hoosic River has shown preliminary PFOA test results of more than 4,000 parts per trillion, said Benedikt Krahforst, the town's water supervisor.

A DEC spokesman would only confirm that the results in Petersburg were "elevated" because they have not yet been finalized.

The PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) levels found in the landfills indicate the toxic chemical that has been linked to cancer is widespread throughout the two Rensselaer County communities. It emanates from more than a dozen polluted areas at varying levels of toxicity, poisoning private water wells used by hundreds of people as well the municipal water supplies used by thousands.

The PFOA pollution in Hoosick Falls has been linked to a factory owned by St. Gobain. It's unclear if another St. Gobain factory in the village also is a source of pollution because it has not yet been tested, eight months after the federal Environmental Protection Agency cautioned Hoosick Falls residents against drinking their water. Pollution in Petersburg has been connected to the Taconic Plastics factory.

Neither of the closed landfills has been declared a state Superfund site, but both are showing some of the highest levels of PFOA pollution yet to be recorded in the state. The dump in Hoosick Falls is located next to homes and the Hoosic River. Nearby is the water treatment facility, which tested at 500 parts per trillion. River samples were far lower than the dumps, but showed PFOA levels of between 9 and 17 parts per trillion, according to the DEC. Vermont has set a water safe consumption limit of 20 parts per trillion for PFOA.

The state is now investigating both dumps, and trying to determine which companies dumped chemicals into them, DEC spokesman Sean Mahar said. The DEC is "refining and focusing" its investigation as a result of the PFOA levels found in the dumps, he said. Right now, the DEC does not believe any drinking water wells were tainted by the pollution in the Hoosick Falls dump, he said, adding that the parties found responsible will be tasked with investigating the scope of the PFOA pollution and will be placed in charge of its cleanup.

"The initial sample results of river water up and down stream of the landfill do not indicate that PFOA from the landfill is impacting water quality in the Hoosic River or wells feeding the municipal water supply or private homes," Mahar said in a statement. "DEC is refining and focusing our investigation based on these sampling results, to determine how the elevated contamination levels observed at the landfill monitoring wells are impacting the surrounding area, and identify those responsible for this contamination."

Still, it's not clear whether state and federal regulators have located all of the sources of PFOA pollution, which the EPA has linked to cancer and other health problems.

In Hoosick Falls, one of the St. Gobain factories has been linked to pollution in the village water supply, but it's still unknown if a separate facility owned by the company is also causing pollution. State officials say the other

factory will soon be tested under an agreement signed last month with St. Gobain and Honeywell, which previously owned the factory.

EPA officials raised the questions of testing the other St. Gobain facility, on Liberty Street, to the state Department of Health, back in November, according to an email obtained by POLITICO under a Freedom of Information request. It's not clear why the facility has yet to be tested.

A map of PFOA results posted on the village of Hoosick Falls website shows that high levels of pollution have been confirmed throughout the village, an indication that there are likely multiple underground pollution plumes of the chemical that takes years to break down and is not easily dissolved in water.

Blood tests released in last month have already confirmed the worst, which is that hundreds of village residents have high levels of PFOA in their blood. Some residents have blood levels that are more than 300 times the national average of 2 parts per billion. The Cuomo administration has not released a comprehensive set of health data, so it's difficult to determine how many people have been affected.

In May, the federal Environmental Protection Agency released an advisory of 70 parts per trillion for consumption of water tainted with PFOA. The public water supply in Hoosick Falls tested at nearly 10 times that amount, and at almost 100 parts per trillion in Petersburg. The Cuomo administration, as well as village officials and federal regulators, have been extensively criticized for waiting so long to reveal the high levels of PFOA in the public water supply, which was known back in 2014.

The EPA linked PFOA exposure to pancreatic, liver and testicular cancers. The study released in May also tied PFOA to a far wider range of health issues than has been previously disclosed, including "high cholesterol, increased liver enzymes, decreased vaccination response, thyroid disorders, pregnancy-induced hypertension and preeclampsia."

The elevated levels in the dumps confirm that the pollution in both Hoosick Falls and Petersburg extends far beyond the plastics plants that used PFOA in manufacturing. PFOA is used in non-stick goods, including cookware, carpeting and furniture. Drinking water sources at homes throughout the village show elevated levels of the PFOA, including some that are more than 10 times the federal safety limits.

The former dump in Petersburg is nestled into the verdant hills above town, where runoff flows into the waterways that pass near homes and into the heart of town. On a recent day, a wild turkey flew out of its hiding spot a foot away from Krahforst, the town water supervisor, as he gave a tour of the polluted site, which was closed 20 years ago. Krahforst said he was thinking about a friend who served guests a platter of trout he caught in the stream where the ooze was seeping.

This week, after waiting for state guidance that didn't come, the town of Petersburg issued its own warning against swimming in local waterways and in eating fish from them.

Low-slung mobile homes are located next to the former dump in Petersburg. According to Krahforst, the water in those homes has not yet been tested for PFOA pollution.

"We're 1,700 people, so of course we're going to be ignored," he said. "That's the way a lot of people here feel."

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## **US House Probes Response to Toxic Chemical in Drinking Water**

By George M. Walsh, Associated Press

Jul 7, 2016, 3:01 PM ET

ABC News

ALBANY, N.Y. — A congressional committee is asking state officials and federal environmental regulators for information about their responses to drinking water contaminated with the toxic chemical PFOA in an upstate New York village.

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform said in letters Wednesday to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy it is concerned about the time it took New York officials to take action on the findings in Hoosick Falls and a possible communication breakdown at EPA.

"The Committee is concerned that a sluggish response to the crisis in Hoosick Falls at the state and county levels caused residents to remain exposed to dangerous levels of PFOA for longer than was necessary," according to the Cuomo Administration letter. "The Committee is looking into whether residents received misleading information that indicated the water posed no health risks, which exacerbated the crisis."

The letter to EPA said the agency was aware of the contamination "in December 2014, but did not take any action until nearly one year later, in November 2015." That was when Regional Director Judith Enck sent village officials a letter saying they should seek an alternate source of drinking water. Enck followed up with a December advisory that said the water wasn't safe for drinking or cooking. Until then, state and village officials had told residents the water was unlikely to cause health problems.

Enck said she wasn't aware of the potential problem until a local attorney brought it to her attention in November 2015.

The letters, first reported by the Times Union of Albany, were sent the same day the state Assembly said it will conduct hearings.

The contamination was discovered by residents concerned about spikes in certain cancers who brought those concerns to state and county officials in the summer of 2014 and then did their own testing, which revealed PFOA levels above the EPA's advisory limit.

PFOA is a toxic chemical long used in the manufacture of Teflon and other nonstick coatings before it was phased out amid health concerns. The chemical has been linked to cancer and other illnesses.

New York environment regulators have signed agreements with New Jersey-based Honeywell International and Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, part of a Paris-based global conglomerate, to pay for the investigation and cleanup of PFOA in public and private wells in the factory village near the Vermont border.

In a statement Thursday, a Cuomo spokesman said the state will cooperate with the committee request and, "We hope the end result is that Congress and the federal government act swiftly to prioritize and to implement uniform, nationwide regulations of PFOA and similar, currently unregulated contaminants." He also disputed the committee's characterization of the state's response as "sluggish."

There was no immediate response to a request for comment from the EPA.

The Rensselaer County villages of Hoosick Falls and nearby Petersburg are in the midst of cleanup work for PFOA contamination.

About 2,500 residents had their blood tested for PFOA this spring. The state Department of Health said the average level was 23.5 micrograms per liter, compared with 2 to 6 micrograms in the general population. The agency said the blood level only tells about exposure, not the likelihood of health effects.

## **Chaffetz probes EPA's inaction in New York water crisis**

By John Siciliano

7/7/16 1:06 PM

The Washington Examiner

The House oversight chairman is blasting the head of the Environmental Protection Agency for allowing a dangerous water contamination problem to spiral out of control in New York for nearly a year before the agency took action.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said in a letter sent to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy late Wednesday that he wants to know "how and why" the residents of Hoosick Falls were not warned of a deadly carcinogen in their water supply even after the agency was made aware of the problem.

Chaffetz also is going after Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York, citing documents that show his administration knew of the contamination for months, but chose not to take action, even after the EPA had said the levels of a cancer-causing substance were dangerously high.

Chaffetz said the committee's records show that the EPA knew about the contamination since December 2014 and did nothing in response until November 2015. He said it wasn't until a local lawyer raised the matter with a senior EPA official that the agency got involved and began warning residents.

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He said the committee wants to understand why EPA "failed to remediate the health crisis in Hoosick Falls as soon as possible" and is requesting all documents, emails and communications since May 1, 2014, on the situation to be turned over to the committee by July 20.

The water crisis in Hoosick Falls has risen in the news in recent weeks when the cancer-causing substance known as PFOA was found at strikingly high levels in blood tests on residents.

Chaffetz wants Cuomo to provide all documents and communications to help the committee understand how and why state and local officials delayed acknowledging the contamination in Hoosick Falls "and continued to provide the public with false and confusing information."

"It raises serious questions that the county and state would continue to assure residents the water was safe to drink even though the federal government had already warned residents to the contrary," Chaffetz stated in the letter to Cuomo sent Wednesday.

The New York crisis follows last year's water crisis in Flint, Mich., over dangerous levels of lead in the city's drinking water. The EPA also failed to advise residents there.

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### **Congress to probe Hoosick Falls water crisis, sends letter to Cuomo, EPA**

Capitol Confidential: Latest news from the Times Union Capitol Bureau

by Casey Seiler, Capitol bureau chief on July 7, 2016 at 10:03 AM

Time Union

The U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform sent letters to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday demanding documents for a pending congressional probe into the handling of the Hoosick Falls' water crisis.



The House committee's investigation cites Times Union articles and other reports that officials at all levels, including the state and Rensselaer County health departments, as well as the EPA, were aware for at least a year that a dangerous chemical had polluted the village's water system but did not warn residents to stop drinking the water.

The letter was sent the same day the state Assembly's Democratic majority announced it would hold two hearings — conducted by the chamber's Health and Environmental Conservation committees — into water quality around the state.

The EPA was notified of the water pollution in December 2014. A year later, EPA regional administrator Judith Enck sent a letter to Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge demanding that he stop telling residents the water was safe to drink. But Borge was relying on advice from the state health department, which issued "fact sheets" to residents that month stating no adverse health effects were expected from normal use of the village's water.

The state Health Department took its position on the water's safety despite a widely reported health study that linked the chemical in the village's water, PFOA, to kidney cancer and other diseases. The EPA issued an advisory in 2009 warning that short-term exposure to water containing PFOA is not safe at levels above 400 parts per trillion. The village's water system recorded levels at more than 600 ppt in August 2014.

"It raises serious questions that the county and state would continue to assure residents the water was safe to drink even though the federal government had already warned residents to the contrary," the House committee wrote in its letter to Cuomo.

Read stories from the TU's ongoing "Toxic Risks" series here.

Here's the letter sent to Cuomo from Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Rep. Cynthia Lummis, R-Wyoming, chairwoman of the Subcommittee on the Interior:

And here's the letter sent to EPA chief administrator Gina McCarthy:

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### **House oversight committee seeks Cuomo documents on Hoosick Falls**

By Scott Waldman

07/07/16 10:31 AM EDT

ALBANY — A congressional oversight committee has requested documents from the Cuomo administration and the federal Environmental Protection Agency related to toxic chemical pollution in Hoosick Falls.

On Wednesday, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform sent a letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo seeking all of the administration's documents and communications related to Hoosick Falls and PFOA.

In the letter, Rep. Jason Chaffetz of Utah, who chairs the oversight committee, and Rep. Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, who chairs the Subcommittee on the Interior, questioned why state and county officials improperly assured local residents that their water was safe, when federal regulators warned of the health risks.

"It raises serious questions that the county and state would continue to assure residents the water was safe to drink even though the federal government had already warned residents to the contrary," he wrote. "The Committee is seeking information as to why the state and county delayed in acknowledging the health risks of PFOA exposure in Hoosick Falls and continued to provide the public with false and confusing information."

Cuomo has steadfastly defended his administration, claiming his employees acted “aggressively,” even as residents have criticized the state health department for a slow response to the unfolding crisis. Cuomo has instead faulted the EPA for not acting sooner.

The committee also questions why officials at the EPA did not alert Region 2 administrator Judith Enck about the PFOA issue sooner, since St. Gobain, the company that owns the factory linked to the pollution, notified the EPA’s Washington office about the problem in December 2014.

In a separate letter to EPA administrator Gina McCarthy, the committee also seeks information from the EPA on why its Washington staff did not correspond with its Region 2 office about water pollution.

“The fact that EPA staff at the agency’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., knew or should have known about the problem, and failed to communicate with their counterparts in region 2, raises serious questions, considering the health and safety of the residents of Hoosick Falls was at stake.”

Cuomo spokesman James Allen said the administration would “clarify the facts” around the state’s handling of the crisis, and again suggested the problems were due in part to an absence of federal regulation.

“States across the country have struggled to confront evolving information about PFOA and other emerging contaminants, particularly in the face of shifting guidelines and the absence of regulation from the federal government,” Allen said in a statement. “We will gladly share our experience in New York to clarify the facts and the steps we have taken to address these challenges. We hope the end result is that Congress and the federal government act swiftly to prioritize and to implement uniform, nationwide regulations of PFOA and similar, currently unregulated contaminants. No town, city, or state should have to fear the water they are drinking. With clear federal regulations, we can achieve that goal.”

The letter from the oversight committee does not call for federal hearings on the Hoosick Falls response, which U.S. Rep. Chris Gibson has requested, but could be a prelude to such hearings. An increasing number of federal lawmakers, including Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer have called for hearings on the state, federal and local response to the Hoosick Falls crisis.

On Wednesday, after days of feuding with Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie scheduled state legislative hearings on Hoosick Falls. Those hearings are planned for September.